

TO SERVE OR TO BE SERVED

Mark 10:32-52

Introduction:

A brief outline of where we are going: this is going to be the last message from Mark for now – finish up chapter 10. Chapter 11 begins with the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem and introduces His journey through what we call the Passion Week leading to His arrest, trial and crucifixion. I am going to leave that for another time.

We are going to be away the next two Sundays – Dr. Bill Goetz will be speaking again. Then when we get back, I am planning to go into a study of 1 & 2 Peter. I believe that what Peter says in his epistles is very timely for the days in which we are living.

So today, open your Bibles to Mark 10 once again, verse 32. There are three sections in this passage that we are covering this morning, but they are all related. Jesus is now in the final stages of his journey toward Jerusalem, knowing what lies ahead when He arrives there.

Jesus Foretells His Death a Third Time

They are on the road, probably on the west side of the Jordan River, heading toward Jericho from where they will travel on up to Jerusalem. Mark seems to indicate a certain tension in the air. Note – Jesus was walking ahead of the others, all alone. Coming behind him were the disciples, the twelve. Mark says they were amazed, astonished – the word also implies being frightened or terrified. Then following them came the crowd, the multitudes of people who followed Jesus, waiting for his teaching – they were afraid, fearful. Overall, there seems to be some tension, a sense of impending doom or disaster.

At some point along the road, Jesus waits for the twelve to catch up, then takes them aside. This is now the third time, recorded by Mark, that Jesus tries to prepare his disciples for the events that He is facing when they get to Jerusalem. He speaks to them clearly again about his suffering and death. *Read vv. 33-34* – note how explicit He is:

- ... going to Jerusalem – He has set his face in this direction
- ... be delivered over – betrayed, given over into the hands of another – Jewish leaders
- ... condemn him to death – Jewish leaders will find reason to execute him
- ... deliver Him over to the Gentiles – the Romans to be crucified
- ... they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him – this is new information that Jesus had not told them before... All these things were predicted by the prophets – Luke tells us that Jesus said, “See we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.”
- ... and kill him – again the message that the Messiah was going to die at the hands of cruel men.
- ... after three days he will rise – this is the part they always seem to miss.

Jesus is very clear about what they are going to face when they arrive in Jerusalem for the Passover in just a few days. But, the message never seems to get to the disciples... they are still focused on the kingdom. Jesus is looking at the cross, they are looking at a crown...

The Request of James and John

As Jesus is heading toward Jerusalem, seeing the cross ahead of him, the disciples are seeing a pathway to glory – a kingdom, a crown. James and John, two brothers, the sons of Zebedee come to Jesus with a request... note: Matthew says it was actually their mother that brought the request on their behalf.

Read vv. 35-37 – So what was it they were asking for? Was this a legitimate request? In fact, it appears that their request is based on what Jesus has already promised them – see Matthew 19:28-30 – *read...*

So what were they asking for? Pre-eminence – Jesus already promised them a throne... Proximity to Jesus – they want their thrones to be close to the King – Jesus. That’s not a bad thing... and, after all, Jesus had promised them that they would reign with him on twelve thrones. The question in their minds was the arrangement of those thrones, and they seemed to always be concerned with status and position.

Then, they are asking for power – that is what a throne represents. Jesus had already bestowed power on them when he sent them out in ministry – now they were asking for what they had been promised and assured of.

So, in his response Jesus does not rebuke or chastise them. He does not accuse them of asking for the wrong thing. But he does remind them that they are going about it the wrong way. He says, in effect, you are looking for greatness through power and authority, in being served.

But, he says, you don't understand the cost of this – the cup, the baptism. In speaking of the cup, Jesus is speaking of the cross. He sees it as a cup given to him by his Father. Later, in the Garden of Gethsemene, he will pray, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not my will but thine be done," (Luke 22:42b).

In the same way, the baptism refers to the overwhelming effect of the events which were coming his way. So he says to James and John, "This is the price of glory. Are you able to pay it?" Look at the self-confidence they express. *Read v. 39a* - "Sure, Lord; whatever. Just bring it on. We can take it. We are able."

Notice how Jesus replies. *Read vv. 39b-40* - He does not try to explain it all to them. Rather, he takes them at their word. "All right. If you want to drink of my cup, and be baptized with my baptism, you shall. But concerning your request, it is not up to me to give that."

These disciples did not understand what they were asking for. How many times is that true of us as well. We ask, not realizing what it will cost. But God graciously gives us what is best and assures us of His presence through it all.

Read vv.42-44 – a few things to note:

- He does not say the leadership approach in the world is wrong.
- It is the way it is. That's how it works in the world
- In the world greatness is seen through authority and lordship, power and position
- It is not to be that way with you – it is different in the kingdom of God.

- If you would be great you need to be willing to serve. The measure of greatness is not how many people you have serving under you, but how many people you are serving.

Then, he holds himself up as the perfect example of this kind of leadership – *read v. 45*. He not only came to serve them, and us and all of humanity, but to give his life. This was another reminder of what he had been trying to tell them for the past few weeks. He came to serve and ultimately to die. Here he adds another concept – that of a ransom. The reason he was going to die in Jerusalem was as a ransom, a payment to buy back what had been lost.

The disciples were so blind they could not see. In fact, they could not even see that they could not see. They had their minds set on glory and power, when Jesus was focused on surrender and serving.

Jesus Heals Blind Bartimaeus

Well, the third section of our passage – seems unrelated, just another random incident of healing in the life of our Lord. But... the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in orchestrating and assembling the message contained in the Word of God. Even the order of events is significant.

Read vv. 46-52 – Some things to note:

- And they came to Jericho ... as they were leaving Jericho. No mention of events there – Zacchaeus (Luke 19), etc.
- Bartimaeus – means son of Timaeus – seems redundant to say it. What is the significance of that name? The name Timaeus in Greek means *highly prized, honored*. So Bartimaeus was the son of honor. Yet, unlike the disciples, what he was looking for was not honor, but simply to be able to see, to have his eyes opened.
- Jesus' question – v. 51. Exactly the same thing he asked James and John in v. 36.
- The man's faith and healing – vv. 51-52

What we see here is in stark contrast to the previous section. James and John were so blind to what was happening in their lives, and unaware of what they really needed. This man was blind physically, but he knew exactly what he needed.

As Ray Stedman says, "...the point of the story, the truly impressive thing about this account, and the reason why Mark has placed it here, is what Bartimaeus did. Here was a man who was conscious of his blindness, whereas the disciples were not."

When he hears that Jesus is passing by, he calls out, and gains an audience with Jesus. Jesus asks him that question, what appears to be a dumb question. After all, isn't it obvious? Bartimaeus put it so simply, "Lord, I want to see. Let me recover my sight." And immediately Jesus said, "Go your way. Your faith has made you well." And Bartimaeus saw, for the first time in his life.

Conclusion

So, why do you suppose this incident with Bartimaeus, "the son of honor," being given his sight occurs right here? Why does Mark record it in this way?

It seems as though Jesus is saying something to his disciples, and to us. He is saying, "When you come asking for good things from God, ask also to be able to see what they involve. Ask to have your sight given to you, so that you see yourself, and all that may be needed, before God can answer that prayer." – *Ray Stedman*

The disciples were blind to their own weaknesses. They were ignorant and foolish and self-confident, having no idea of what it was going to cost to receive the place of glory they were asking for. Jesus wanted them to see the need to have their eyes opened to the depth of their own need, to be willing to leave behind their desire for glory and to open themselves up to all that He wanted to do in them.

Is that not what He wants for all of us?

Prayer